

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5664

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to improving teachers' skills in teaching children with learning differences.

Brief Description: Improving teachers' skills with regard to children with learning differences.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/21/05, 3/28/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires that school-level plans to achieve school-level goals related to the state learning goal for reading, writing, and communication include research-based assessment and instructional strategies for students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and language disabilities.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Santos, Shabro and Tom.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

Dyslexia and Dysgraphia

Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability, resulting in difficulties with specific language skills, particularly reading. Students with dyslexia may experience difficulties in other language skills such as spelling writing, and speaking. Dyslexia is referred to as a learning disability because it can have an adverse effect on student academic performance.

Dysgraphia is a neurological disorder manifested in a difficulty with handwriting. There are several different kinds of dysgraphia. Some people with dysgraphia display handwriting that is often illegible and shows irregular and inconsistent letter formations. Others write legibly, but very slowly and/or very small. When these individuals revert to printing, as they often do, their writing is often a random mixture of upper- and lower-case letters. In all cases of dysgraphia, writing requires inordinate amounts of energy, stamina, and time.

Teacher Skills and Salary Allocation

Certificated personnel are required to complete a minimum of 150 clock-hours of continuing education requirements every five years for renewal of the certificate. Clock-hour requirements can be met through completing in-service training courses, continuing education courses, internships, or college credits.

The statewide Salary Allocation Model (SAM) for certificated staff provides increased funding after completion of specified numbers of college credits. The SAM does not use clock-hours to calculate increases. For certificated personnel who elect to complete clock-hours instead of earning college credits, state law defines how the completion of clock-hours translates into college credits for purposes of an increase on the SAM. For example, the completion of 10 in-service training or continuing education clock-hours is equal to one college credit. Credits earned in this manner are applied to the SAM only if the course content meets certain criteria. One of the criterion is that the content be consistent with the school-based plan to achieve the school's student performance goals.

School-Based Plans

The Washington Basic Education Act (Act) directs school districts to provide opportunities for students to develop the knowledge and skills essential to read with comprehension, write with skill, and communicate effectively and responsibly in a variety of ways and setting. This is commonly known as learning goal number one and is one of four state learning goals under the Act. Student performance on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) is intended to demonstrate student mastery of the state learning goals. Each school must develop a school-level plan to achieve the school's annual student performance goals for meeting the state standard on the WASL as established by the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission.

Summary of Bill:

The school-based plan to achieve the school's student performance goals related to learning goal number one must include research-based assessment and instructional strategies for students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and language disabilities as applicable and appropriate for individual certificated instructional staff.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support) We have been working on the issue of children's needs related to dyslexia for a long time. Much research has been developed over the years. We know so much more now about effective strategies to teach children with dyslexia and other reading problems. This research will open the door for children to be able to learn to read. The need

to ensure that all teachers, not just special education teachers or early learning specialists, have the tools to provide effective reading instruction to dyslexic students. We want teachers to have the skills to teach reading to children who learn differently at all levels.

(With concerns) The higher education community is where we need to focus. Teacher preparation programs should include the most up-to-date information and research for assessing and instructing dyslexic students. Accountability is the issue. We are lacking a policy to require teachers to come out of college with better skills to use the research surrounding reading difficulties and/or dyslexia.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; and Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

(With concerns) Mickey Lahmann and N. Sue Geiger, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Gary King, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.